

10

THE ORTHODOX WORD

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Whoever therefore shall confess Me before men,
him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.

But whosoever shall deny Me before men,
him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword.

St. Matthew 10: 32-4

EVERY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN is called to confess Jesus Christ, to be His witness among men. Not all are called to be martyrs -- the word itself means "witness" -- nor to confess Christ in the midst of terrible persecutions. But it is required of all to live the Christian life which the Church teaches, to undergo the strenuous training which is necessary to wage the unseen warfare with the enemy of our salvation, and to conform one's life ever more to the standards of the Church.

These are the deeds of faith by which all may confess the Lord, by which it may be known that we are His followers, and without which normal spiritual growth goes astray or simply withers away.

The sword of zeal to serve God is the necessary weapon with which to cut off the temptations of evil and worldliness. Without the spiritual warfare wherein Christ is witnessed, there is no Christianity and no salvation.



Saint Demetrios of Thessalonica

260 - 296

Commemorated October 26

ICON BY FOTIS KONTOGLOU (see p. 133)

THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR OF CHRIST
SAINT DEMETRIOS
OF THESSALONICA

THE FEAST DAY of St. Demetrios is a great feast for all of Orthodoxy, but especially Thessalonica, which is his birthplace. His church is a building dating from the ancient Christian era, built one hundred years after his martyrdom which was in 296 A.D. But after 300 years it burned, and was rebuilt in the days of Leo the Wise.

St. Demetrios along with St. George are the two brave lads of Christianity. These two are below on earth, and the two Archangels Michael and Gabriel are above in heaven.

In ancient times they were painted without armor, but in later years they were depicted armored with swords and spears and dressed in metal breastplates. On one shoulder they have their helmet hanging, and on the other their shield. At the waist they are girded with the straps which hold the sheath of the sword and the quiver which has in it the arrows and the bow. In recent years, after the conquest of Constantinople, these two saints, and many times other soldier saints also, are painted as riding horses, St. George on a white horse, St. Demetrios on a red one.

This armor which these Saints wear, depicts spiritual weapons, like those of which the Apostle Paul speaks saying, "Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high. Therefore take up the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of justice and having your feet shod with the readiness of the Gospel of peace, in all things taking up the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, that is, the word of God" (Eph. 6:11-17). This heroic and

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persevering character, which the warriors have who were martyred for Christ like harmless and innocent sheep, has reference to spiritual things.

St. Demetrios, the Great Martyr and Myrovletes (myrrh-emitting), was born in Thessalonica in 260 A.D. His parents were illustrious people and along with the transitory glory which Demetrios had from his family, he was adorned with imperishable virtues, with prudence, with sweetness, with humility, with justice, and with every noble comeliness of the soul. All these were like precious stones which shone on the crown which he wore, and this crown was the faith in Christ.

In those days, there reigned in Rome Diocletian, and he had appointed as caesar in the parts of Macedonia and the East a hard-hearted and bloodthirsty general who was called Maximian, a beast in human form as were all those military rulers (polemarchs) who then ruled the world with the sword: Diocletian, Maxentius, Maximian, Galerius, Licinius -- hard headed, fierce-faced, strong-jawed, grim-mouthed, with short thick necks like barrels, ruthless, and terrifying. He in turn appointed Demetrios ruler of Thessalonica and all Thessalia. When Maximian returned from a certain war, he gathered the officers at Thessalonica in order to offer sacrifice to the idols. Then Demetrios revealed that he was a Christian, and did not accept hewn stones as gods.

Maximian went into a rage and ordered that he be tried and imprisoned in a bath. And all the while he was imprisoned, the populace ran with mourning to hear Demetrios teach the people of Christ. A young lad, Nestor, also went every day and heard his teaching.

During those days, many brave men fought in the stadium and Maximian rejoiced at these spectacles. He even had in great honor a certain henchman Lyaeus, a beastly man, brass-knuckled, an idolator and blasphemer, brought from some barbarous nation. Nestor, seeing that this Lyaeus had defeated all and boasted that he had the strength of Ares, the pagan god of war, and that no native dared wrestle with him, went to the prison and besought St. Demetrios to bless him to defeat and put to shame Lyaeus and Maximian and their religion.

St. Demetrios prayed and made the sign of the Cross over him, and immediately Nestor ran to the stadium and wrestled with that fierce giant, and he threw him down, and slew him. Then Maximian became beside himself with rage and learning that Nestor was a Christian and that St. Demetrios had blessed him, he ordered the soldiers to have them put to death.

SAINT DEMETRIOS

And they going to the bath lanced St. Demetrios with their spears, and thus he received the eternal crown on the 26th of October, 296 A.D., at the age of thirty-six. It is written that when he saw the soldiers thrusting their spears at him, he raised high his arm and they lanced him in the side, so that he might be deemed worthy to receive the lancing which Christ received in His side, and there ran blood and water from the wound. Nestor was beheaded the next day outside the wall at the place of the Golden Gate with his own sword.

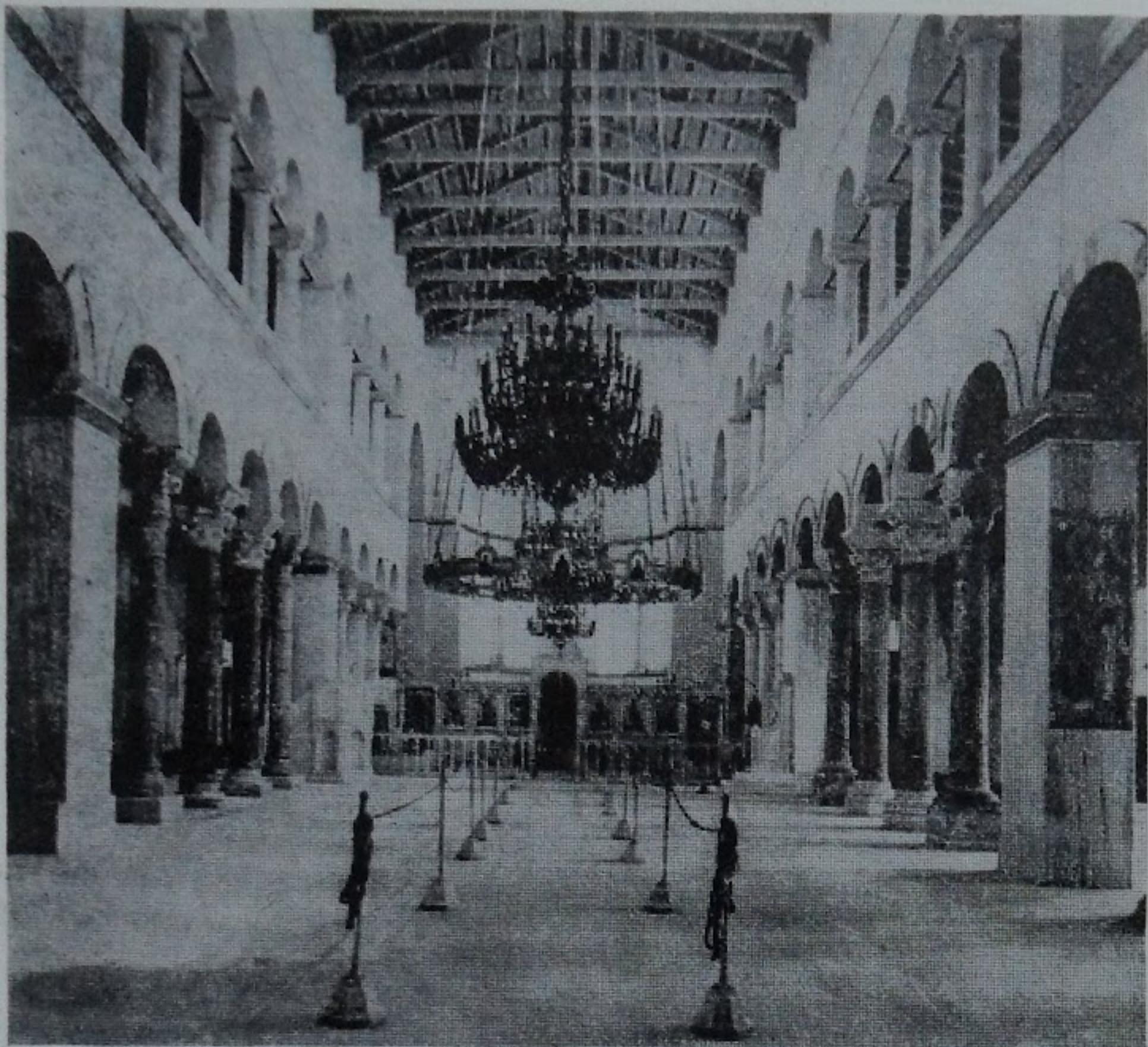
The Christians took the holy remains and buried them side by side, and from the grave of St. Demetrios there came forth holy myrrh which cured many diseases. For this reason he is called *Myrovletes*. Over his grave and the place of his martyrdom there was built a church in the days of St. Constantine the Great. Later, a great church was built in the form of a basilica which stands to this day. In 1143 the Emperor Manuel Comnenos sent from Constantinople and brought the holy icon of the Saint which was at his tomb and put it in the Monastery of Pantocrator, whose church was built by the Comneni and is called today Zeirek.

This then is the martyrdom of St. Demetrios the Great Martyr and Myrrh-bearer, who loved our Saviour above all things of this life -- pleasures, wealth, honors -- and longed to be dissolved that he might be found with Him in the celestial Kingdom, through whose prayers may we also be deemed worthy of like fate. Amen.

SOME MIRACLES OF SAINT DEMETRIOS

During the years of the Christian kings, there was a certain bishop in a city of Africa who one day boarded a ship to go to Alexandria. On the way, pirates boarded the ship and took the people captive. They carried off the bishop and sold him in the East to a Hagarene prince who, being an evil and wild man, commanded him to carry dung to his vineyards and gardens. Many times as the bishop was carrying the basket of dung upon his head, he would say with tears, "Woe unto me! Where is the time when I held upon my head the Immaculate Mysteries -- and to what have I now been brought down?" Day and night, therefore, he besought God to free him from that captivity.

One night, St. Demetrios appeared to him sitting upon a white horse. The Saint said to him, "What is your sorrow, that you weep?" The bishop answered, "What is my sorrow, you ask? Do you not see



The Basilica of Saint Demetrios in Thessalonica

THE CHURCH OF ST. DEMETRIOS

The Church of St. Demetrios in Thessalonica was built over the site of his martyrdom -- the Roman bath in which he was imprisoned. This bath is preserved to this day in a crypt under the sanctuary of the Church. During the Moslem rule of the city, which lasted almost 500 years, the Church had been turned into a mosque and Christians were forbidden to enter. Thus, the existence of the bath in a crypt under the floor of the sanctuary was totally unknown

when Thessalonica was taken again by the Christians in 1912. In 1917 a great fire broke out which destroyed most of the city, and this was the cause for the discovery of the bath -- the floor of the sanctuary having fallen through. Among other things there was discovered the first chapel built over the place of his martyrdom (martyrium) with an earthen vessel planted in the Holy Table, containing earth with human blood -- evidently of the holy Martyr. A great marble basin was also discovered which was used to gather the holy myrrh from the grave of the Saint (see opposite page).

There were two attempts to recover the relics of St. Demetrios -- once in the days of St. Constantine when the Saint appeared and said, "Do not dismember me, but rather leave me whole in my own country," and another time in the days of St. Justinian when fire came forth and scorched those that were digging when they reached the marble tomb of the Saint. A voice was also heard saying, "Dig no more." To this day the holy relics have not been recovered. There is even a question as to where the tomb of the Saint is located within the Church, every trace of it having been removed by the Moslems when they were occupying the Church. At the Holy Mountain and at other places there is preserved blood of the Saint with earth which was taken by the Christians at the time of his martyrdom.

THE MYRRH-BEARER

St. Demetrios is one of the very few saints from whose relics, by the grace of God, there has flowed a fragrant and healing myrrh. Among other great myrrh-bearers are St. Nicholas, St. Symeon of Serbia, and St. Nil of Mount Athos, whose relics, unlike St. Demetrios', are preserved to this day.

About St. Demetrios we have this account: There lived once an ascetic on the Mount of Solomon who, hearing of the reports of the holy myrrh, had doubts, saying in his mind that there were many other great martyrs who suffered more than St. Demetrios, yet they were not honored by God in such a manner. And one night after he had finished his prayers he saw, as if in a dream, that he was in the Church of St. Demetrios and he met the man who had the keys to the tomb of the Saint, and he asked him to open it that he might venerate it. When he was kissing the shrine, he observed that it was wet with the fragrant myrrh, and he said to the keeper, "Come, help me dig that we might see from whence comes this myrrh." They dug, therefore, and came to a large marble slab which they removed with great difficulty, and immediately there appeared the body of the Saint, shining and fragrant, from which welled up abundant myrrh coming from the openings in his body made by the piercings of the lances. There flowed so much myrrh that both the keeper and the ascetic were drenched, and fearing to be drowned, the monk cried out, "Saint Demetrios, help!" Whereupon, he awoke from this vision and found himself to be drenched with the holy myrrh.

There has been no record of myrrh from the relics of St. Demetrios since the 12th century, and the relics themselves were never found after the Turkish occupation of the Church -- for God, Who is merciful, also withdraws His mercies from sinners. (In due time an article in The Orthodox Word will be devoted to the very phenomenon of myrrh-bearing saints.)



The basin into which myrrh once flowed from the relics of St. Demetrios. Ducts led to it from the Saint's tomb in the church above.

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how many evils have come upon me, the miserable one? During the day I am in labor; and in the night I am in chains. What good do I, the wretched one, have that I should not weep?" The Saint then said, "Come, mount up on the back of my horse." The bishop answered, "Sir, I cannot get up, because I am bound." Again, the Saint said to him, "Get up, since I tell you so." The bishop therefore got up and mounted the horse. And most wondrously they were both immediately on horseback outside of Thessalonica.

When they found themselves there, the Saint said unto the bishop, "I have houses here, and I am lord of this city; therefore I will go before and you inquire and come after me." The bishop replied, "And how shall I inquire, sir?" The Saint said to him, "Ask where are the houses of Demetrios, the lord of Thessalonica, and by inquiring in this manner you will find me and I shall make preparations for you to return to your own home." These things the Saint said to him, and then appeared to enter the city. When the bishop came to the gates of the city walls, he inquired as the Saint told him, but the gatekeepers mocked him, saying to him, "We have no Demetrios as lord." But others who were wise understood upon hearing the question of the bishop that the great Demetrios had worked some miracle for him (because the Saint would daily work miracles for captives). Therefore, they asked him, "What manner of man are you?" And he told them the whole account -- that he had been a prisoner in the East, but a certain soldier had appeared to him and had freed him and brought him to that place. Then the men said to him, "Come, so we can take you to the Church that you may meet him." And as they went into the Church and he saw the Saint's icon, he recognized him, and embracing the icon with tears, he said, "This is the soldier who freed me." When the Archbishop of Thessalonica learned of these events, he supplied the bishop with money to return to Africa.

A certain farmer in Cappadocia was cleaning a place for a barn and uncovered in the ground an ancient stone foundation. While he was thus digging, a young horseman rode up to him and cried: "Why are you destroying my house, making it into a barn for yourself? Know, that if you do this, you will suffer much and bitterly. I who speak to you am Demetrios from Thessalonica, whom everyone here venerates." The farmer, frightened by the Saint's words, left his work and hurried home. His relatives, finding out the reason for his great agitation and fear, went immediately to that place, cleared it off, and found there the

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foundation of an ancient church which had been dedicated to St. Demetrios. And so, on the very same foundation, there was subsequently erected a magnificent church, in which was placed an icon depicting a large cross with the crucified Lord upon it, and the face of the Great Martyr; for St. Demetrios vanquished the delusion of idol-worship by means of the Cross, and by his suffering he was co-crucified with Christ.

But just as no one could possibly count the number of drops in the rain, so is it impossible to describe all the miracles worked by St. Demetrios. Innumerable times he saved his native city from every kind of enemy, visible and invisible, doing this sometimes openly, and sometimes in hidden fashion. Most miraculous of all was his holy myrrh, in which all found free healing from every disease. The grave of St. Demetrios was a second Pool of Bethesda, and was even more miraculous than it; for the latter healed only one in a year, and the former healed every day a multitude of sick people.

The mercy of God, however, so abundantly manifest in the miracles of St. Demetrios, is sometimes withdrawn due to our persistence in sins. So it was that God delivered Thessalonica and the Church of St. Demetrios to the Hagarenes; and since that time his fragrant myrrh has not been seen, and the holy relics themselves have vanished.

During the time when Thessalonica was about to be taken by the Hagarenes, some pious Christians were travelling to Thessalonica for the feast of the Saint. They reached the royal highway which was at Bardarion, and there they saw a soldier coming from Thessalonica and a bishop coming on the road from Larisa. When the soldier and bishop met, the soldier spoke first, saying to the bishop, "Rejoice, Hierarch of God, Achilleios." And the bishop said in return, "Rejoice also, soldier of Christ, Demetrios." When those Christians heard these names, they stood to one side in fear to see what would happen. Again the soldier spoke to the bishop, "From where are you coming, Hierarch of God, and where are you going?" Then St. Achilleios wept and said to him, "Because of the sins and iniquities of the people, God has commanded that I depart from Larisa which I guarded, because it shall be surrendered into the hands of the Hagarenes. And behold, I have departed and I am going wherever He commands me. And you, therefore, from where are you coming? Tell me, I beseech you!" Then St. Demetrios wept also and said to him, "I, too, have suffered the same thing, O Bishop Achilleios.

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Many times I aided the Thessalonians and redeemed them out of captivity and plague and all manner of illness, yet now because of their many sins and iniquities God has departed from them and has commanded me to abandon them that they might be surrendered into the hands of the Hagarenes. For this reason I submitted to His order, and I, also, have departed and go wherever He commands me." When both of them had said these things, they bowed their heads upon the earth and wept. After much time they kissed and greeted one another and immediately disappeared. When those Christians saw this wonder, they did not dare go on to Thessalonica, but returned to their homes and told what they had seen. A month did not pass before both Larisa and Thessalonica were taken and plundered by the Turks.

St. Simeon the Translator wrote the martyrdom of the holy Great Martyr Demetrios in Greek; it is kept in the Monasteries of Great Lavra, Iviron, and others. Moreover, St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain composed six new canons -- in six tones -- to St Demetrios, which, numbered together with two other ancient canons (one in first tone, the other in second tone), comprise a beautiful *Octoechos* to St. Demetrios. They were published in the end of the book *Gate of Repentance*. The divine Gregory Palamas of Thessalonica has written an elegant eulogy to his martyric majesty. Also, the praises (of Matins) of St. Demetrios were written by St. Theophan the Branded (see his Life on October 11). Macarios the Deaf has written a eulogy to the great Demetrios as also has Leo the Wise, whose eulogy to him, written in Greek, is preserved in the Monastery of Pantocrator. A homily to his myrrh has been written by John the Archivist of Thessalonica, and is found in the Monasteries of Great Lavra, Vatopedi, and Dionysiou. In the Monastery of Iviron is found a homily written by the Patriarch Philotheos.

CONTEMPORARY MIRACLES IN RUSSIA

by Archimandrite Haralambos Basilopoulos

In this book is presented the true religious state which exists in Russia, and there are set forth several miracles which took place lately among the Russian people. Even the unbelievers are compelled to believe.

As an example, we quote a miracle which took place last October, which an eyewitness describes and with which the Russian press was compelled to deal.

The translation of the letter from Russia:

SAINT DEMETRIOS

Beloved,

We read with emotion all the details of how there were found on Lesbos, the Aegean island, the holy relics of the Greeks who were martyred for Christ. If it is possible, send us the icon of the Saint and wonderworking Greek Martyr, Raphael.¹ This which you write, that almost the whole Greek village frequently saw the Saint appearing in their sleep and commanding them to dig to find his relics and the relics of those who were martyred with him, made a great impression upon us. We said: "But it is possible for the Saint himself to appear, and especially to sinners?"

But believe me, before seven days had passed, we were punished for our little faith! From our sister who lives near Pskov we received a letter together with clippings from local newspapers. And now I copy her letter for you word-for-word:

"...On the 26th of October, we began preparations for the celebration of the anniversary of the October Revolution, because many officials would come here from various places in order to visit the graves of those who had fallen during the war. We all worked voluntarily and cleared out the dry grass and laid the paths with small gravel. At night we slept in the community hall of the village, some forty-five women from the surrounding villages. We fell asleep like dead people from fatigue.

"At night, one of us woke up and cried, 'Help, comrades. I see phantoms!' 'What did you see? What did you see?' we all asked. 'I saw a shining young man upon a horse, holding in his hands a golden cup. The horseman told me, "Look at this holy chalice which is full of the Blood of Christ which shall enlighten all of you and shall bring love and peace." I wanted to ask him, "Who are you?" but I could not. But he understood, and told me, "Dig there at this certain place and you shall learn who I am." The dream was most vivid.' Afterward, we lay down again to sleep. This time seventeen women and girls saw the same dream (of these, eleven are Party members). Again the horseman! Again the golden cup which shone in his hand! And again he commanded, 'Dig there so you may learn who I am.'

1. In 1959 there began a series of apparitions seen by a multitude of people on the island of Mitylene (Lesbos), revealing the graves and martyrdoms of numerous New Martyrs who lived five hundred years ago. The most outstanding of the group were the priestmonk Raphael, his deacon Nicholas, and the child virgin-martyr Irene. This most amazing account is recorded in Greek in a book by Fotios Kontoglou called *A Great Sign*.

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"We discussed among ourselves what we should do. In our area there is not even one priest. We thought of going to Leningrad. We went. But everywhere they closed the doors and mocked us as being insane and backwards. Finally, someone told us to go to the archeologists. We went. They told us that until now no one has made excavations on the basis of dreams, and that the funds of the public were not for being thrown away. We returned in discouragement to our hotel. At four in the morning, the telephone rang. The archeologists were seeking us! With voices that trembled, they told us to go and find them again by the first bus. We went again. They were upset. They had seen the same dream! Upon the golden cup was the form of Christ. The thing was made widely known. Comments in the press. Derision. Mockery. We succeeded, however.

"A party of workers and volunteers, together with archeologists, departed. After three days the first ruins were found. There was a whole grouping of churches. Every day in their sleep they saw the Saint on horseback commanding them, 'Dig! Dig!' On the fourth night, all of them, after having agreed among themselves, asked him, 'Who are you?' The Saint became angered and shouted loudly, 'But don't you know me? I am *Demetrios of Thessalonica* and Christ has sent me to you to bring you once more love and peace!!' On the thirteenth day, while digging, we finally found his majestic temple and his icon, as well as the holy chalice which he had held in his hands... Uproar! Great commotion! Even the press wrote concerning it, sketchily, however -- distorted. But all of us now know the truth..."

P.S. We regret that we cannot write more details. But let the deficiency be filled by a clipping from a Soviet newspaper of January 15, 1966, which we quote:

A UNIQUE DISCOVERY

According to ancient manuscripts, it is known that in the area of the town Dovmontov, near Pskov, there existed more than twenty stone churches, a whole Pompeii. Just recently, an archeological party succeeded in discovering one of the churches, the Church of Demetrios of Thessalonica, which was built, according to ancient manuscripts, in 1144. During the time of excavation, the archeologists discovered an earthen vessel of unique value. Upon it was preserved the form of a man which, however, had no relation to the abstract (iconographic) form of the saint.

This unique relief gives us the first acquaintance with the art of the area of Pskov which was dedicated to religion.

JOYFUL LIGHT

By ARCHIMANDRITE SEBASTIAN DABOVICH¹
SAN FRANCISCO, 1899

*Joyful Light of the Holy Glory
of the Immortal Heavenly Father,
Holy and Blessed, Jesus Christ.
Having come to the setting of the sun
and beheld the evening light,
we hymn God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Worthy art Thou at all times
to be hymned with reverent voices,
Son of God, Giver of Life:
Wherefore the world glorifies Thee.*

VESPER HYMN

BEAUTIFUL WORDS! What a fullness of expression this soft light, that has come even unto the setting of the sun, conveys to us, inhabitants of the extreme West, Christians who live just where the sun goes down after shining over the last continent of earth. I wish all of you could enjoy the sweetness of harmonious phraseology which glides all through this sublime hymn as we have it in the Greek or in its Slavonic translation. The poetry suffers in order to preserve the sense of the original words when translated into the English. But the thought itself is so elaborate that you catch a faint echo of the sacred music.

The reason why this hymn is appropriated to evening devotion is plainly expressed in the hymn itself. The thought of Christ, the soft Light, is naturally called forth at sight of the sunset and the mellow light of lamps. Christ, by the Godhead, is an ever-existing Light, as He is the eternal Brightness of the Father, and the express Image of His Being (Heb. 1:3). But for the salvation of humankind, He concealed His Divine Glory beneath the form of a man, and in this way He became

1. 1863-1940, the first American-born Orthodox priest, a native of San Francisco.

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the soft light of the evening. A comparison very striking! The haze that generally fills the evening air lessens the brightness of the sunlight. In the daytime the light of the sun is unbearable, so that one cannot look at it with an unarmed eye. But look at the same sun in the evening, and see how softly it shines. Everyone may look on it plainly, admire its beauty, and the beauty of those gorgeous pictures that it forms in the clouds by the reflection of its light. And thus it is that the Son of God, unapproachable according to His Divinity, has made Himself accessible to us by His humanity, through which the Light of Godhead had lessened so that we could see the Word of Life with plain eyes, hear and feel Him (John 1:1); and having made Himself accessible to all, He made the way approachable for all, through Himself, to the Heavenly Father, the Holy, the Blessed, so that they who have seen the Son have seen the Father Himself (John 15:9).

The Eastern light has come to the West -- to the uttermost Western end. And blessed be they who, with a clear vision, perceive this light just as it shines in the East. This light, although it came from the East, did not change, but while it shines in the West, it continues to be the light of the East; it is the Eternal Light. Christ, Who is the East Himself, laid down Himself as the chief cornerstone of His Church, which He established in the East, and they in the West who receive this Light of the East, must so shine as the Light of the East would have them be enlightened; but not allow themselves to be dazzled with the glare of a false fire; I say fire, but not light, as no light comes from the West! Praise and glorify the Good God! See, He comes to the West from the East, that all may see by that One Light, and be saved in the bond of union, which is love!

For many centuries this evening hymn has been heard in Christian temples; nor has it through all these ages, nor in the temples, lost its freshness and tenderness. It seems, rather, that with every going down of the sun it becomes new again; at every eventide to which it pleases God to prolong our life it may stimulate our souls with new vigor, with holy thoughts, with heavenly aspiring emotion. Do we sing this praise ourselves, or do we hear others hymn, we always feel a hallowed sweetness of heart, an elevated feeling inspires the soul. But where does the evening sun go? It does not fade away but, hidden from us, it lights up with the same brightness the other side of the earth. And so without a

JOYFUL LIGHT

doubt, our spiritual sun, which is hidden from our eyes, always and in like manner shines and is seen in all His Glory in another world, whereas here the eye of faith may see only the reflection of His never-setting Light.

The historic tradition which tells how this hymn was composed is most interesting: On one of the hills of Jerusalem -- very likely on the same mount from which the Saviour of the world looked down upon Jerusalem in the mellow twilight, and sorrowfully conversed with His disciples of the approaching fall of the city of God -- there sat, all alone, an old man, the wise old Sophronios; he was Bishop of Jerusalem, Patriarch of the earliest Eastern Church: he sat, and his meditative gaze was fixed on the setting sun of Palestine. The profound stillness, the fading light of the evening, the cool and invigorating air, and other impressive pictures of nature at eventide, with which the wise Sophronios loved to enjoy himself, so fixed the attention of the servant of God that he fell into a deep meditation. Before him lay Jerusalem, with which great memories of so much are connected; the rays of the sun now, as oft before, fell on that glorious city, but they never more shone down in it to light up the Temple of Solomon, nor the palace of Herod, nor the strong walls and high towers of Zion. It looked dreary and desolate -- as desolate as it is in a house when the host, dead a long time, leaves no one to keep house after him. The wise Sophronios did not grieve for the ruins of the walls and Temple of Jerusalem. He knew that from the fragments of the old the new Jerusalem arose, which shone out in all the world, and over which shineth the Glory of God; for he had once, before becoming Patriarch, wended his way with a pilgrim's staff through Greece, Palestine, Syria, Egypt; seeing everywhere Christian cities, and everywhere finding temples consecrated in the Name of the Saviour.

And so the evening light, softly falling over the remains of the ancient Jerusalem, directs the thoughts of the wise, grand old man and prelate to objects of more importance than the ruins of the city. As Elias of old in the still small voice (I Kings 19: 12) recognized the presence of Jehovah, so does old Sophronios, philosopher, historian, orator and poet, patriarch and saint all at the same time, in the soft light of the evening twilight, mentally feel the touch of another, higher Light. The material sun, declining in the West, inclines the mind of the Bishop to conceive the immaterial sun, and the image of the Holy, Life-conceiving Trinity

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was borne before his spiritual eyes. The Western destination of the sun brought to his memory the gloomy West of the fallen nature of mankind; the soft light of the setting sun, softly bathing in its rays tired nature at eventide, lively represents to him the descent of the Son of God into dark humanity, that He may enlighten and resurrect it, and with it all nature. In the cool breath of the evening air he perceives the type of that grace by which the Holy Spirit, in consequence of the Redemption accomplished on the Cross by Jesus Christ, quickens and spiritualizes man and the universe. The soul of the wise old man abounds in pious emotion, and with a trembling voice, a saintly voice, he sings an evening hymn to the Creator of the universe: O Thou soft¹ Light of the Holy Glory, O Christ my Saviour! Thou that revealed unto us the Glory of the Father! O soft Light of the Holy Glory upon which the spiritual eye loves to gaze, as the eyes of the body upon the mellow twilight! Thou wouldst save the world, and Thou camest once upon a time into the dark West -- yea, even down unto our nature; therefore, each time when we reach the going down of the sun, day by day, when we behold the light of the evening, we praise Thy Father, Thee the Son we praise, praise we the Holy Spirit, glorifying the Triune God. O Son of God, Who givest life unto us and all creatures! We should sing to Thee with reverential voices, we should fall down before Thee not only at the setting of the sun, nor only when we see the twilight, but at all times of the day and the year. Thou art the Life of the world, and Thee therefore the whole world glorifies. Amen.

1. The Slavonic version of this hymn has "soft" or "quiet Light" in place of the Greek "joyful Light" (*ed. note*).

FOTIS KONTOGLOU

By CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS
Wheaton College, Norton, Mass.

Fotis Kontoglou, the greatest icon painter of modern Greece and one of her most important theologians and literary writers, died at Athens on July 13, 1965. His death, the result of an operation for stones in the bladder by an incompetent surgeon, passed almost entirely unnoticed in America, even among Greek-Americans. But it was deeply mourned throughout Greece. All the religious and literary periodicals, the newspapers of Athens and the other cities of Greece wrote articles lamenting his departure, and stressing his achievements as an iconographer and writer as well as his exemplary character and life.

I was in Greece at the time of Kontoglou's death, and had the good fortune of seeing and talking with this great and holy man for the last time just five days before his "falling asleep." The news of his death reached me while I was in the island of Mytilene, the birthplace of my parents, and about to depart for a pilgrimage to Mount Athos. I received a telegram from the editor of an Athenian religious monthly, informing me about Kontoglou's death and asking me to write an obituary. The news was a great shock to me, but I managed to gather my thoughts together and fulfill this difficult request.

Upon my return to the United States, months later, my attention was called to the fact that the passing away of Kontoglou had not occasioned the appearance of even a single article about him in publications in this country. Since then, a number of my friends, who follow periodical literature here far better than I do, have been telling me that this matter still has not been remedied, and have been urging me to write something about Kontoglou. Accordingly, I have undertaken to write this brief biography.



FOTIS KONTOGLOU
1895 - 1965

 OTIS KONTOGLOU was born on November 8, 1895, at Kydoniai (Aivali), a city on the west coast of Asia Minor, across from Mytilene. He came from a very devout family, which had its own chapel. In this chapel there were, among other precious articles, a carved ancient crucifix and a large panel icon depicting Saint Paraskevi. Many of his ancestors were monks; and one of his uncles, Stephanos Kontoglou, was a hieromonk, abbot of the Monastery of Saint Paraskevi near Kydoniai. Stephanos was an important influence in Fotis' life. In one of his earliest publications, his book *Vasanta* (1923), he dedicates the chapter containing translations from the Psalms of David "To the austere soul of the hieromonk Stephanos Kontoglou, my uncle, whose virtue I perpetually have before me as a model and rule."

The childhood of Fotis, which is the popular form of Fotios (or Photios), was spent amidst the idyllic surroundings of the very cultured and prosperous city of Kydoniai. This city of about 30,000 was inhabited entirely by Greeks, except for three persons -- the district governor, the judge, and the tax collector -- who were Turks. He was extremely fond of the sea and of boats, and of the solitude provided by the deserted neighboring islets. He liked to be alone and live as much as possible like Robinson Crusoe. In one of his articles, which was written in 1955, he says: "Many times I lived on a deserted island for months, all alone, free like Robinson Crusoe, without bringing at all to my mind cities, men, and their trivialities." Daniel Defoe's hero fascinated Kontoglou all through his life; he mentions him in many of his writings.

After graduating from the famous Academy or Gymnasium of Kydoniai, Kontoglou left for Europe. He spent a good number of years there, especially in France, studying the art masterpieces, acquiring the techniques of painting, and broadening his learning in general. He was in Paris when the First World War broke out, and he stayed there during the entire war. It was here that he made his first appearance not only as an artist, winning prizes for his paintings, but also as a writer. His first book, *Pedro Cazas*, was written in Paris and published there in 1919.

Some months after the armistice was signed, Kontoglou returned to his native city. He stayed at Kydoniai until 1922, when the Greeks of Asia Minor were expelled by the Turks. He wrote there in 1920 a

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remarkable prologue for the second edition of *Pedro Cazas*, which was published at Athens in 1922. Here he sets forth some of his basic ideas about literature and the fine arts -- ideas by which he abided ever after.

In 1922, persecuted by the Turks, he and the other members of his family passed across to Thermi, Mytilene. Later he went to Athens, which became his permanent place of residence. Disliking the noise and distractions of cities, he always lived at the outskirts of Athens. When the Kontoglou family left Kydoniai, they took with them the sacred articles which I mentioned above as well as some others, including a few Church books, instead of things which would have been more valuable according to the opinion of the worldly-minded. These Kontoglou kept in his house throughout his life as his most cherished possessions. After his death, they were donated by his wife, Maria, to the Monastery of Saint Paraskevi at Nea Makri, Attica, in accordance with his wish.

At Athens, Kontoglou soon became well-known in literary circles as a result of his book *Pedro Cazas*, which was highly praised by critics. His reputation as a writer grew with the appearance of his books *Vasanta* (a Sanskrit word meaning springtime) in 1923, and *Taxidia*, "Travels," in 1928, and the literary and art periodical *Philike Hetairia*, "Friendly Society," which he founded in 1925. Within a few years Kontoglou won an enviable place in the Greek world of letters, being admired for his style -- which is characterized by clarity, simplicity, vigor, and warmth --, his remarkable observations and profound thoughts.

AS A PAINTER, Kontoglou was slow in winning recognition. He had to overcome difficult obstacles. After leaving Europe, he became increasingly impressed by the Byzantine tradition of painting. Before long he decided to give up what he had learned in Europe about painting, and apply himself to the mastery of painting according to the Byzantine tradition. But there were no masters of this art in Greece at that time; all the painters used Western prototypes and techniques. He had to become his own teacher, and learn the secrets of the great and venerable tradition of Byzantine art by reading old manuscripts and visiting the Byzantine monuments, studying closely and patiently the works of the old masters. In one of his articles, published in 1953, he says: "I, too, happen to be one of those who 'lived for many years at the great centers of Europe.' But long ago I threw away into the wastebasket the paper certificates of my wisdom, as soon as I realized that the best education is the study of what thousands of years of work and experience

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have left us...." Further, Kontoglou had to overcome the strong prejudice in the public against Byzantine art -- a prejudice which had spread more and more widely in Greece since her liberation in the last century. Having won their liberation from the Turks, the Greeks began to abandon their tradition and turn to the West for prototypes in art and culture in general. The view of Byzantium current in Europe at that time was disseminated in Greece, and was accepted more and more widely. According to that view, Byzantine civilization was a lower civilization, not worthy of serious study, and Byzantine art was lower, almost barbaric art. The acceptance of this view meant the abandonment of the great tradition of Byzantine art and the adoption of modern European, particularly Italian Renaissance, models and techniques. Kontoglou succeeded magnificently in overcoming both obstacles. But it took time.

The first of them was by far the easier one to overcome. He learned his most important lessons about Byzantine art at the Holy Mountain of Athos and at Mystra. With regard to Athos, it is significant that he wrote there several chapters as well as the preface and the profound concluding chapter on the fine arts of his second book, *Vasanta*, and that one of his three poems that appear in this book was inspired by a Byzantine painting in a very old chapel on Athos, as he notes at the end of the poem. His debt to Athos in his development as an iconographer is evinced also by a volume published in 1925 containing photographs of copies, executed by him, of Byzantine frescoes at Athos; and also by the illustrations in two issues of *Philike Hetairia* of that year showing panel icons of the Monastery of Iviron as rendered by him. Kontoglou visited Mystra not long after his sojourn on the Holy Mountain. He made copies of some of the wall paintings in the Byzantine churches at Mystra; and later he worked there for a long time cleaning the wall paintings in the Church of Peribleptos.

Kontoglou's book *Taxidia*, which was published five years after *Vasanta*, shows that he studied carefully the frescoes at Mystra, the mosaics of Osios Lukas at Phocis, and the panel icons at Demetsana, Monemvasia, and the Cyclades Islands, particularly Melos and Kimolos. *Taxidia* contains descriptions of such sacred paintings, drawings which Kontoglou made of them, and passages expressing his great admiration of Byzantine art. Comparing Byzantine art with European religious art, he says in one place: "In the countries of Europe there are churches with paintings that are famous for their artistic merit; yet they do not have

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the mystery and the power of evoking contrition (*katanyxis*) possessed by the icons that were done by some unlettered and simple Byzantine painters." From a statement which he makes elsewhere in this book it is clear that by this time he was executing for Greek churches panel icons done in the Byzantine style. Speaking of the large, recently built parish church in Kimolos, he says: "I myself have made two icons on the iconostasis: Saint George, mounted on a horse, and Saint Eugenia, using egg as a medium, according to the system which has been handed down to us by the old iconographers."

Around 1930 he was appointed technical supervisor at the Byzantine Museum in Athens. He offered valuable services there for many years, as he possessed both great love for the works gathered in the museum and technical knowledge for cleaning and preserving them.

In 1932, Kontoglou published a slender volume entitled *Icones et Fresques d'Art Byzantine*, containing twenty plates showing Byzantine panel icons and frescoes as copied by him. He continued to paint panel icons during this period. In the small basilica at Athens known as Monasteraki, I have noticed many fine icons on the iconostasis done by his hand in the early thirties.

During the later thirties, Kontoglou decorated three large rooms of the City Hall of Athens with historical frescoes. This was his first large scale work as a fresco painter, and his only extensive secular one. His next major achievement as a fresco painter was the iconographic decoration of the large Church of Zoodochos Peghi at Liopesi (Paiania), a town not far from Athens. He began working here in 1939. The Second World War interrupted his work, but he resumed it when the war was over. When I first met Kontoglou, in 1952, he took me to Liopesi and showed me the numerous beautiful murals he had painted, remarking on their distinctive Byzantine features.

During the Second World War Kontoglou occupied himself with writing. He produced one book after another. Between 1942 and 1945 he published at least eight books. Most of them are rather small. The largest and most important of these is *Mystikos Kepos*, "Mystical Garden," which came out in 1944. This is one of the best works he has written, extremely eloquent and moving. His chapters on Piety (*Theosevia*) and St. Isaac the Syrian are masterpieces, full of deep religious feeling. He speaks of other remarkable ascetics of Syria and Mesopotamia, and stresses throughout the virtues of faith, humility, and purity. Next in importance among his works of this period are *Histories kai Peristatika*,

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"Stories and Incidents" (1944) and *Hoi Archaioi Anthropoi tes Anatoles*, "The Ancient-like Men of Anatolia" (1945), both of them small books containing nostalgic accounts of his native place and its people, as well as chapters dealing with religious themes, especially Byzantine art.

THE MOST FRUITFUL period of Kontoglou, both as a painter and as a writer, was the last twenty years of his life, from the end of the Second World War to the last month before his death. This was indeed a period of quite astonishing productivity. Assisted by several of his talented pupils, he painted during this period countless panel icons, which are to be seen in churches in many parts of Greece as well as in the United States and other countries, and many thousands of square yards of wall paintings. Next after the church at Liopesi, which I mentioned above, he frescoed the entire interior of the Church of Saint Andrew off Patission Street at Athens. Then he did wall paintings for the new Metropolitan Church of Evangelismos in Rhodes and the Church of Saint George at Stemnitsa, Arcadia. And finally he decorated with fresco icons the eastern apse, the central dome, the pendentives and barrel vaults below the dome, and other surfaces of the following Athenian churches: Kapnikarea, Saint George at Kypseli, Saint Haralambos in the park Pedion tou Areos, Saint Nicholas at Kato Patissia, and some others.

Through these works, the training of many gifted young artists in the techniques of Byzantine iconography, as well as his long, luminous and spirited defense of Byzantine art, which culminated in 1961 in the monumental two-volume work entitled *Ekphrasis*, "Expression" -- in which he teaches the theory and practice of Byzantine iconography -- Kontoglou succeeded in making this art prevail in Greece. His influence has spread to America, where many churches have been decorated with panel icons, frescoes and mosaics done by his pupils, as well as by others who follow more or less the Byzantine tradition.

Occupying himself during this same period with writing also, he authored among other books the following very edifying ones: *The Life and Conduct of Blaise Pascal* (1947); *The Life and Ascesis of Our Holy Father Saint Mark the Anchorite*¹ (1947); *Fount of Life* (1951), in which he presents briefly the lives and selections from the teachings of some of the great Saints of the Orthodox Church; *The Holy Gospel According to Matthew, Interpreted* (1952), *Ekphrasis* (1961), *A Great Sign* (1962), in which he gives

1. Translated in *The Orthodox Word*, no. 1, 1966, with illustrations by Kontoglou (ed. note).

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accounts of many extraordinary miracles that occurred recently at Thermi, Mytilene; and *What Orthodoxy is and What Papism Is* (1964). Also, he translated into Greek Leonid Ouspensky's *L'Icone: Quelques Mots sur son Sens Dogmatique*, and published it with a preface and notes of his own as well as illustrations, with the title *Eikona* (1952); and he founded and edited, together with the young theologian Basil Moustakis, *Kivotos* (1952-1955), a religious periodical concerned especially with Orthodox spirituality. In addition, Kontoglou contributed many articles to various other periodicals -- particularly *Nea Hestia*, *Hellenike Demiourgia*, *Ekklesia*, and *Ephemerios* - to encyclopedias, and to the Athenian daily *Elephtheria*. His articles in *Elephtheria* are so numerous that they would make up several volumes if gathered together. Many of them are among the best things he has written, and among the profoundest that have been written by a Greek. Most of his articles in these publications are concerned with religious themes, such as faith and reason, religion and philosophy, religious vs. secular art, Byzantine iconography, Byzantine music, the lives of Martyrs and other Saints, and so on.

Kontoglou was awarded prizes for two of his most recent books. He won the Academy of Athens Prize for his book *Ekphrasis*, in 1961, and the Purfina Prize for his book *Aivali: My Native Place*, in 1963. The latter is the first volume of his *Erga*, "Works," which began to be published by Astir Publishing Company at Athens in 1962, and of which four volumes have already appeared. (The total number of volumes of this series, each of over 300 pages and constituted of articles, parts of already published books, or of unpublished writings, may exceed 24.)

In recognition of his great achievements as an author, the Academy of Athens, the highest cultural institution of Greece, awarded him on March 24, 1965, its *Aristeion Grammaton*, its Highest Prize in Letters.

Besides writing many books and hundreds of articles, Kontoglou carried on an enormous correspondence. He once told me that he wrote about fifty letters a month. He corresponded with persons in many parts of the world, not only Greeks, but also Americans, Finns, Frenchmen, Germans, Russians, Ugandans, and others. He had countless friends and admirers throughout the world who sought his guidance in matters of iconography and of Orthodox doctrine and living. He often read me excerpts from their letters. And I have met many such persons at his home.

IN THE BOOKS, articles, and letters of Kontoglou we encounter a man who has unshakable religious faith, free from all scepticism and metaphysical anguish. We encounter a man who is steeped in the Holy

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Scriptures and the writings of the Eastern Church Fathers, particularly the great mystics, such as Saint Macarios the Egyptian, Saint John Climacos, Saint Isaac the Syrian, Saint Symeon the New Theologian, and Saint Gregory the Sinaite. We find a man who has the profoundest respect for the Sacred Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy, including all its dogmas, holy canons, and sacred arts (architecture, iconography, music), allowing no compromise on these, tolerating no deviation from them. Orthodoxy was for him the sacred *Kivotos*, the sacred Ark, and these its precious contents, which must be carefully guarded and not be cast away, or be exchanged for counterfeits.

Kontoglou was strongly opposed to the participation of Orthodoxy in "Ecumenism." For he saw in such participation the dangers of compromise on matters which admit of no compromise. And he had witnessed the flagrant violation of holy canons of the Orthodox Church in the name of "Ecumenism." He was especially critical of the maneuvers of Patriarch Athenagoras, in whom he saw an apostate, a betrayer of Greece and of Orthodoxy. In his last book, entitled *Ti Einai he Orthodoxia kai ti Einai ho Papismos*, "What Orthodoxy is and What Papism is," Kontoglou stresses the abyss that separates Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism, which renders utterly absurd Athenagoras' assertions that there are no real differences between the two.

Kontoglou was a man of adamantine Orthodox faith and impeccable character, adorned with the virtues of great humility, longsuffering, courage, wisdom, purity, hope and love. He was a devout man, a holy man, a man of God. All that he did bears the impress of these qualities.

As during his life, so at his death, it was evident that he was free from worldly attachments, a citizen of the City of God, not of the earthly city, whose glory is temporary and whose power is doomed to pass away. He died poor, ignored by the State. His funeral was plain, free of all worldly display. His body was not accompanied to the grave by any State dignitaries, but only by sincere friends and admirers, who loved him greatly and were deeply grieved that they would see and hear him no more during their sojourn on earth. Among these was the head of the Church of Greece, Archbishop Chrysostomos. This very venerable hierarch praised his beloved Fotios in the highest terms as an icon painter, as a theologian, as an author, and as a man. Among the many memorable things His Eminence Chrysostomos said in his funeral speech this statement especially deserves to be mentioned. "We are escorting today," he said, "a man who without exaggeration can be classed among the Saints and Confessors of the Faith."

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

This open letter appeared in the Greek religious periodical The Three Hierarchs, December, 1965, issue no. 1228, as an editorial. It was written especially for this issue by one of the most erudite of Greek churchmen, Archimandrite Epiphanios Theodoropoulos. He edited the recent edition in five volumes of the Greek Philokalia, supplying the scripture references. His written defences of Orthodox Tradition are well known, and his pamphlet, "The Non-transferability of Bishops" is the popular handbook on the subject, which he thoroughly examines in the light of the Sacred Canons and the Fathers, completely silencing the innovators and defiers of the Canons. Among his other works are: Has the Church Authority to Forgive Sins, Holy Scripture and Evil Spirits, and Freemasonry in the Light of Truth.

Your All-Holiness: For some years now the body of the Orthodox Church, the consciously religious body, stands as an anxious spectator before the Faith-endangering acrobatics of the First Bishop of Orthodoxy. In short, in order that we might avoid another kind of acrobatics, the behavior of you and some of your representatives toward the Pope and Papism casts the truly Orthodox children of the Church not only into unspeakable sorrow, but also into terrible spiritual trial.

You correspond with the Pope on every ecclesiastical matter as if we lived in the fifth century after Christ. You subject yourself to the distresses of long journeys to meet him. You exchange with him tender embraces and brotherly kisses. You call him "First Bishop of Christendom," and yourself the second. You proclaim *urbi et orbi* that "no difference separates the two Churches." You pray with his representatives and conduct yourself toward them almost as you do toward Orthodox bishops. You lift from the midst centuries-long excommunications which, even if they had been laid

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under the force of impressions from momentary events of unprecedented sharpness as a reaction to such events, none the less express nothing but the universal catholic mind of blameless and God-bearing Orthodoxy, and they constituted nothing but a plain application, indeed much delayed, of the ordinances of the Canon Law of the Church which impose the expulsion from the God-constructed Fold of the sheep "incurable and diseased unto death" -- that is, the heretics and corruptors of the Faith.

Your All-Holiness: Which of these two things has happened? Has the Pope joined Orthodoxy, or you the Papacy? If it is the first, proclaim it so that we may all joyfully celebrate and dance with one another. If the second, speak with sincerity and directness in order that we might make certain that along with the old, the new Rome is destroyed and has sunk into heresy. If none of these things has happened, but both you and the Pope remain each in his boundaries, then how are your actions to be explained? How is it possible for the heretical Pope to be the First Bishop of Christendom and you the second? When did our Church ever number the bishops of the heretics with Orthodox bishops? Are you using the language of dogmatic and canonical exactness, or of dissembling diplomatic hypocrisy? Are you a bishop or a diplomat? And further, how is it possible for the canonical penalties of the Church to be lifted when their object (heresy) not only continues to exist, but prosperously increases and is enlarged and exults in itself? Even if there existed no excommunications against the papists for their rash changes in the Faith, these would have to be pronounced today by common consent of all the Orthodox Churches, in compliance with the stated and clear orders of the Sacred Canons. How then and why, since they do exist, are they lifted?

Your All-Holiness: It is said that you act as you do so that by befriending the worldly, powerful Vatican you might oppose the splendor and power gained from its alliance to the Turkish threats and thus be able to strengthen the violently threatened and shaken throne of the onetime reigning city. If this is true, you are both deceived and toil in vain. Do we have the alliance of God, your All-Holiness, yes or no? If yes, then *one shall pursue a thousand and two shall turn back ten thousand*; then even if billows should arise, or high seas or the anger of Turkish savages, they shall be for us less than a spider's web; then *the desert places of*

AN OPEN LETTER

Jordan shall blossom and rejoice in trees and be glad and the lame man shall leap as a hart and the tongue of the mute shall speak plainly; then know ye nations and be defeated for God is with us. If no, then to what purpose do we trust in princes, in the sons of men in whom there is no salvation? Then, your All-Holiness, the words of the prophet are applicable to us: Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, who trust in horses and chariots because they are many, and in horses which are a great multitude; and have not trusted in the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought the Lord. Therefore, He has wisely brought evils upon them, and His word shall not be set at naught; and He shall rise up against the houses of wicked men, and against their vain hope: which is the Egyptian, a man and not God, and in the flesh of horses, in whom there is no help. But the Lord shall bring His hand upon them, and the helpers shall fail and all shall perish together (Esaias 31:1-3).

Your All-Holiness: It is ten thousand times preferable for the historical throne of Constantinople to be uprooted and replanted on a barren island of the sea or even to be sunk to the depths of the Bosphorus, rather than to deviate even the slightest from the golden way of the Fathers who with one voice cry: "There is no room for compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith." The seven lamp-stands of the Apocalypse have been quenched from long before on account of our sins. Seven apostolic Churches, Churches having the highest honor of receiving, these in particular, letters from heaven through the God-inspired Seer of Patmos, have vanished from the face of the earth.¹ And there where once was performed the awesome mysteries and the Trinitarian hymn was chanted, today perhaps owls are hooting or "monsters dance there." However, the Bride of the Lord has not died. The Church of Christ has not vanished. She continues her passage through the ages, wounded and bloody like her Founder, but ever living and indomitable, enlightening, shedding warmth and life, and saving souls. She never shall die, therefore, even if the Ecumenical Throne should be moved or destroyed. Not a single Orthodox prays for the transfer or the destruction of the Ecumenical Throne. God forbid! But again not a one will sacrifice for its sake one jot or tittle from the Orthodox Faith. Struggle for it with all your strength. You do not simply have the right, you are required to make secure your throne. Sacrifice for its sake anything whatsoever:

1. These are the apostolic Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyateira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicia, which were completely destroyed in the destruction of Asia Minor in 1924 when all the Christians were expelled or massacred.

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money, possessions, honor, glory, valuable treasures, deacons, presbyters, bishops, and even Patriarch Athenagoras! One thing only retain, one thing guard, one thing spare, one thing sacrifice not: the Orthodox Faith. The Ecumenical Throne has value and usefulness only when it sheds abroad upon all the earth the sweet and unsetting light of Orthodoxy. Lighthouses are useful if and as long as they light the way for those who travel on the sea to avoid the reefs. When their light is extinguished, then they are not only useless but harmful, for they are themselves transformed into hazards.

Your All-Holiness: Already you have advanced very far. Your feet have dipped in the Rubicon.¹ The patience of thousands of pious souls, of clergy and laity, is progressively being exhausted. For the love of the Lord, turn back! Do not will to create schisms and divisions in the Church. You are attempting to unite the separated, and the only thing that you will accomplish will be to divide the united and to open fissures in ground until today firm and solid. Come to your senses and awake! But alas, you have traveled far. Already "it is toward evening and the day is far spent." How will you see the yawning abysses to which the path you are traveling soon leads? Might it be, O might it be, that He Who once *made the sun stand over against Gabaon and the moon over against the valley of Ailon* would repeat the miracle and once again lengthen the day, would strengthen yet more its light and open your eyes, in order that you might see, understand, and return.

With the deepest respect,
THE THREE HIERarchs

1. This refers to an incident in the life of Julius Caesar when he marched against Pompey. The Rubicon River was the border of the province he governed. By crossing the Rubicon Julius Caesar disavowed any opportunity he might have had to return to his own rightful province and thus openly declared his decision to march to Rome and contest for power.

ORTHODOXY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

OPEN LETTERS OF TWO MOSCOW PRIESTS ATTRACT WORLD-WIDE ATTENTION

Of all the recent signs that indicate ferment in religious life within the Soviet Union, none has attracted more attention, both within the USSR and abroad, than the two open letters of the Moscow priests, Nicholai Eshliman and Gleb Yakunin, one to Patriarch Alexy and one to head of state Podgorny, protesting the uncanonical conditions in which the Church of the Patriarchate of Moscow presently finds itself. The letter to Podgorny protests interference by the government in the life of the Church; the letter to the Patriarch protests the conduct of the Church hierarchy and proposes correctives for it, at the same time presenting a religious ideology that merits careful examination. Since their appearance last December (they are dated Dec. 13, 1965), both letters have appeared several times in the Russian press abroad, and translations have been made into English and several European languages. Of the letter to the Patriarch, which will be examined here, duplicate copies were sent to all bishops in the USSR and to many hierarchs abroad; both the effort involved and the response would seem to indicate that the opinions expressed are not those of the two authors alone, but of a considerable number of bishops and priests in the USSR.

The first part of the letter to Patriarch Alexy is one long accusation against

those responsible for the present state of the Church in the USSR -- chiefly the hierarchs. "It is clear that the Russian Church is heavily and seriously ill, and that her sickness has come about entirely because the ecclesiastical authorities have shirked from fulfilling their duties, and have overstepped the limit beyond which one must not go." The Church is the victim of "serious irregularities." This situation has come about particularly since 1957 under pressure from Khrushchev: in this period the Council on the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church became "an organ of unofficial and illegal control over the Moscow Patriarchate." This Council, governing the Church chiefly by means of unofficial oral instructions and undocumented agreements, has in recent years been responsible for: 1. illegal registrations of baptisms, marriages, funerals, and other needs on special forms which are examined by government departments and used to harass and persecute believers; 2. mass closing of churches, monasteries, and church schools (10,000 or more churches closed in the period 1961-1964); 3. prohibition of services in homes and panikhidas at cemeteries; 4. compulsory estrangement of children from church (children under 18 are forbidden to serve in church, and in some dioceses are refused Holy Communion); 5. interference of secular officials in the

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appointment of clergy, by which means worthy candidates are eliminated, being replaced by the morally unstable, unbelievers, and the totally unprincipled, in order to destroy the Church. A special protest is made against a decree of the Synod made in 1961, which "takes away from the priest the administrative and economic management of the parish (and) in actual fact lowers the priest to the level of an employee celebrating services and rites on a contractual basis, and makes him entirely dependent on the executive committee," thus placing control of parishes in the hands of laymen -- often unbelievers and local Communist officials.

The blame for all of this is placed on the clergy: "At this time in the Russian Church there is a whole group of bishops and priests who under a pietistic guise are consciously and actively perverting the spirit of Russian Orthodoxy. These men have conceived the evil idea of corrupting the Russian Church, to implant in it a spirit of lukewarmness, servility, and of pharisaism, the corrupting spirit of 'this world.'" Even those bishops and priests who disapprove of the present situation are silent, either from fear or because they think thus to "save" the Church from an even worse fate -- in vain. "By their sinful silence they cover up the lawlessness and in this way they are assisting all the enemies of the Holy Church."

To be sure, all of this has been said before -- but only outside of the USSR. The value of the document up to this point lies not in the novelty of its con-

tent, but in the fact that a voice from within the Soviet Church itself confirms, in the firmest possible language, some of the gravest accusations made by Orthodox observers abroad. The boldness of the authors is praiseworthy; but it in itself is not enough to justify the unqualified praise which world opinion has given them. In their proposed solutions to the crying abuses they have publicized one finds reason enough to question this uncritical acclaim.

The "sickness" of the Soviet Church can be corrected, according to the two priests, by the calling of (1) a new council of bishops who will revoke the decree of 1961; and (2) a new local council of the whole Russian Church, with the widest representation, which will put an end to government interference in Church life. What is envisioned is a return to the basis of Soviet "legality": namely, the Soviet decree of 1918 "On the Separation of Church and State," and Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution, which proclaims "freedom of conscience." But it is naive in the extreme to expect the Soviets to abide by any laws, even their own; for their regime is based precisely upon lawlessness, and their campaign to exterminate the Church -- sometimes by "legal," sometimes by "illegal" means -- is only a logical part of their whole lawless world view. The two priests are the victims of Soviet propaganda if they actually believe that Communism seeks to "coexist" with Christianity or will tolerate any real freedom of conscience.

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But the futility of their trust in Soviet "legality" is not yet the most important thing that leads one to question this document; it is the very conception of Orthodox Christianity expressed there that leads one to protest. In speaking of the spiritual resources of the Russian Church that will be utilized in the envisioned local council, the authors end with a list of recent "renowned thinkers," including numbers of "liberals" and outright heretics and blasphemers (all the way to Berdyaev); and their choice is symptomatic, for it is the modernist ideas of some of these thinkers that seem to have inspired the ideology of the present document. "The twentieth century...has confronted the Holy Church with a spiritual obligation of transforming in a new and creative way the teaching of Orthodoxy"; as witness that Christians today are responding to this "obligation," the authors cite the preparations for a new Orthodox ecumenical council, as well as -- the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church! What is being prepared is "a new universal Christian renaissance"!

Here we have, not the voice of sober traditional Orthodoxy, but merely another of the myriad voices of worldly dreams; the voice, not of the Church of Christ, but of the "ecumenical Christianity" whose apostles clog the highways of contemporary ideology; one of the same tired voices that find the answers to contemporary Church problems in some ideal "renewal," "reformation," "renaissance" -- in everything except the

genuine, hard and practical Christianity of the Fathers.

One cannot but believe in the sincerity of these two priests, and respect them for the truth about the Soviet Church which they have been bold to proclaim; for this truth they are already suffering. On May 16 of this year they were released from their posts and suspended from sacramental functions by Patriarch Alexy, with a warning that more severe measures would follow their unrepentance. On July 6 the Patriarch addressed a letter to all bishops (indicating the importance of the matter), announcing the suspension of the priests and objecting to their "open letters" as a means of spreading distrust and disunity in the Church. And subsequently both have been arrested and confined in a mental hospital.

And yet, insofar as these priests have been swayed by the spirit of the age and become mouthpieces for the cliches of contemporary falsehood and apostasy, they will undoubtedly be used, probably by the Soviets themselves, to further the "ecumenical" cause. Their very naivete plays into the Communists' hands. When their envisioned local council is called, "by the very fact of its free existence the Church will witness to the whole world that in our country the sacred right of man to religious freedom is actually realized." "Neither the cunning of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, nor any interviews and 'authoritative' statements, nor any participation of Russian hierarchs in

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international movements are capable of proving something that does not exist: the freedom of the Russian Church." But is there not here an opportunity the Communist authorities would welcome? Recent publicity has tended to invalidate their claim that the Church in the USSR is free; would not, however, a "free" council (which the Soviet authorities would know only too well how to manipulate, even though risks would be involved) succeed where grosser propaganda has failed? Could the Soviets themselves, in fact, have devised a better means for regaining lost respect abroad and thereby increasing the influence of the Soviet Church in the World Council of Churches and in Pan-Orthodox meetings? The calling of any kind of council under present-day conditions of Soviet reality can give no one cause for rejoicing.

This document is undoubtedly an important sign, and it is essential that it not give rise to false optimism about the present or future state of the Church in the Soviet Union. One response to this document in the West has been to distinguish between the "official" Church of the leading Soviet hierarchs, and the real believing Church, of which the two priests are taken as spokesmen. And there is, of course, a difference between the mechanical repetition of Soviet propaganda, and the sincere expression of belief which the letter of the two priests evidently contains. It may be that these two priests are examples of the best that the Soviet clergy has to offer -- but if so,

it is no indication for hope or optimism, but quite the contrary. If the best among the Soviet clergy preach the same "ecumenical Christianity" which is the last stage of dying Christendom in the West, then one will have to look elsewhere in the USSR for genuine Orthodox Christianity -- namely, among simple believers who are not deceived by dreams of an imaginary "renaissance" of Christianity, and in the catacombs, among those Orthodox clergy and believers who refuse to be tainted by contact with the "official," Communist-controlled Church.

The rescue of the Soviet Church, which these two priests have attempted with such boldness, cannot come from within itself, and most definitely not under Soviet conditions. The Soviet Church is sick, and it should thus be quarantined by the rest of the Orthodox world and not allowed to spread its infection abroad. For the sickness is deeper than the priests suppose, and their document is itself a symptom of it. This sickness is not limited to Communist interference in Church life, but is found much more in uncoerced acceptance of the "ecumenical" spirit of the age, of which spirit Communism is but one of many types. The priests' letter itself breathes this spirit and is merely another sign that nothing is to be hoped for from any "changes" within the USSR; the necessary precondition for the healing of the infected organism is the total overthrow of the Communist system. Only then can there be even talk of a return to normal religious life in Russia.

The Teaching of St. Seraphim of Sarov on
**THE AQUISITION
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT¹**

MY JOY, I BEG YOU, acquire the Spirit of Peace," said Father Seraphim to the monk, and at once he began to explain what it means to acquire the Spirit of Peace. "That means to bring oneself to such a state that our spirit will not be disturbed by anything. One must be like a dead man or absolutely deaf or blind during any sorrow, calumny, accusations and persecutions, which inevitably come to all those who wish to follow the saving path of Christ. For one must go through many sorrows to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the way all righteous men were saved and inherited the Heavenly Kingdom. And before this all the glory of this world is nothing; all the enjoyments of this world are not even a shadow of that which is prepared in the heavenly abodes for those who love God: there, is eternal joy and triumph. So that our spirit will have freedom to uplift itself there and be nourished from sweetest conversation with the Lord, one must humble oneself with constant vigils, prayer, and remembrance of the Lord.

"And I, humble Seraphim," said the starets, "for this reason go through the Gospel daily. On Monday I read St. Matthew, from beginning to end; on Tuesday, St. Mark; on Wednesday, St. Luke; on Thursday, St. John; the other days I divide between the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the Apostles. And I do not for a single day neglect to read the daily Epistle and Gospel, and also the readings to the saints. Through this not only my soul, but even my body rejoices and is vivified, because I converse with the Lord, I hold in my mind His Life and Suffering, and day and night I glorify and give thanks to my Redeemer for all His mercies that are shed upon mankind and upon me, the unworthy one."

1. From the *Diveyovo Convent Chronicles*, compiled by Archimandrite Seraphim, St. Petersburg, 1903, pp. 360-362.

Then, in indescribable joy, he uttered: "Here, I'll tell you about humble Seraphim! I took a special liking to the words of my Lord Jesus Christ: *In My Father's house are many mansions* (that is, for those who serve Him and glorify His Holy Name). On these words I, humble Seraphim, paused and wished to see these heavenly abodes, and I prayed my Lord Jesus Christ to show them to me; and the Lord did not deprive me, the humble one, of His mercy. He fulfilled my desire and request; and so I was transported to these heavenly abodes, only I do not know whether in the body or without the body, God knows; it is inconceivable. And about that joy and heavenly sweetness of which I there partook, it is impossible to tell you."

With these words Father Seraphim became silent... He stooped his head, quietly patting his heart with his hand; his face began gradually to change and finally became so glowing that it was impossible to look at him. During his sacred silence he was as if contemplating something with humility.

Then Father Seraphim once more began to talk. "Oh, if only you could know," said the Starets to the monk, "what joy, what sweetness await the souls of the righteous in heaven, then you would be determined in this temporal life to endure any sorrow, persecution, and calumny with gratitude. If this very cell of ours" (at this he pointed to his cell) "were full of worms, and if these worms were to eat our flesh throughout our whole temporal life, then with utmost desire we should consent to it, only not to be deprived of that heavenly joy which God has prepared for those who love Him. There, there is no sickness, no sorrow, no lamentation; there is sweetness and rejoicing unutterable; there the righteous will shine like the sun. But if the holy Apostle Paul himself (II Cor. 12: 2-4) could not explain that heavenly glory and joy, then what other human tongue could describe the beauty of the high dwelling in which the souls of the righteous shall dwell?"

At the conclusion of his talk the Starets spoke about how it is necessary to take attentive care of one's salvation -- now, before the favorable time for this has passed.



A PILGRIMAGE TO THE ORTHODOX

HOLY PLACES OF AMERICA

THE THIRD PILGRIMAGE

JUST FORTY MILES north of the bustling metropolis of New York City along the Hudson River, and within several miles of Nyack, New York, a Russian Orthodox convent is located near the small town of Spring Valley, New York. Fenced by a stone hedge and enclosed in a shady grove is a small snow-white church with a blue dome and a glittering cross that dominates a group of buildings and a huge cemetery -- a sea of white Easter crosses. All this constitutes the monastic grounds, which shelter and preserve the living heritage and something of the fervency of early Christians. The convent has an Orthodox spirit which is quite remarkable; its authenticity, its absolute uniqueness in the modern age, is a miracle by itself.

This community, one family in Christ, sprang up in the New World as a transplanted continuation of the great *Diveyovo* Convent of St. Seraphim. This family in Christ has the blessings of the last Optina elders, as well as many sacred relics and icons. Above all it treasures an icon, a full-length portrait of St. Seraphim painted during his lifetime...

As the pilgrim devoutly enters the Convent gate he meets at his right a little icon-chapel of the Protection of the Mother of God -- and his soul enters the realm of another world, the world of the first catacomb Christians of ancient times, the world of sober Orthodox Christians of today, the world of perhaps the last Christians who prepare to meet the Coming of the Lord...



NOVO- DIVEYEVO CONVENT

NEAR SPRING VALLEY, NEW YORK

Everything that may be in your heart, anything over which you are grieving or that has happened to you -- come all of you to my grave, and falling to the ground tell me of it as if I were alive. And I will hear you, and your sorrow will pass! Speak to me as if I were alive, and I will always be alive for you.

St. Seraphim of Sarov.

THESE WORDS WERE spoken by the great Saint to his spiritual children, who were then the nuns and sisters of the newly-established convent "Diveyevo," in central Russia early in the last century. Having bequeathed a rich spiritual tradition to be followed, and endowed the monastic community with the sacred contact with him, he peacefully departed this life.

His words proved to be true. He heard his spiritual children not only at his grave, but everywhere. Any object with which he had been in some way connected, and especially his portraits, became instruments of contact with him. Several portraits were painted of him while he was alive. These portraits supplied the living remembrance of him until his canonization in 1903, when icons could be painted of him. Until the eve of the Revolution in 1917 the Convent was one of Russia's holiest places.

The terrible Revolution left in absolute desolation almost all the monasteries of Russia, among them Sarov and Diveyevo. But believers continued to come in their distress to St. Seraphim, even outside the boundaries of what was once Russia, and so the sacred contact was preserved between the afflicted and repentant souls of believers, and the always loving and warm *batushka* of the other world, St. Seraphim. This



Modest and unpretentious from the outside, the St. Seraphim Church is quite lavish inside. All the frescoes and the icons and decorations on the icon-screen were done by the artist N. A. Papkoff.

living contact, a sign of Christ's "trampling down death by death," inspired a new monastic community; and, even though separated by many years and thousands of miles from its prototype, it took the name of "New (in Russian *Novo*) Diveyev." The man responsible for this new community was *Father Adrian Rymarenko*.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, with its militant anti-theism, evoked in sincere Christians a thorough reexamination of values and gave rise to a fervency that returned men to the spirit of the catacombs. The prevailing apocalyptic atmosphere made urgent for young Orthodox Russians the basic question of what to do with their lives. Many openly went to martyrdom...

A young economics graduate, the future Father Adrian, seeking the answer to this question was led by the books of S. Nilus to the renowned Optina Monastery, where God-bearing holy startsi were living out the sunset of their glorious institution. In his despair he listened to their calm, simple talk, which conveyed the timeless wisdom of the Church Fathers. The startsi, Anatoly (the younger) and Nectary, breathed into him hope and the true Christian joy of living. Their instructions to him sum up the teaching of the great Optina Monastery to

the persecuted Christians of the 20th century. Fr. Adrian became a living witness to the truth of their message, and the new Diveyovo its vessel:

You ask us what you should do? Well, -- live in utter reverence for whatever is God's, and most of all with regard to your thought, which must be in God. The witnessing of faith must be done in the act of reverence... This godly reverence should constitute in us all our care, it must penetrate all aspects of our life, personal, family, and social. This godly reverence is contained in the daily cycle of Church services. During nocturn the 17th Cathisma (Psalm 118) is read, where the Prophet David reveals God's truth to his son Solomon. And to us the Church offers the 17th Cathisma as a device to uncover our own inward being. As one of the methods to acquire this reverence the Holy Church offers the spiritual exercise of training our thought to keep in mind the Name of God: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us..."

And so he began in full earnest; trusting only God during the ferocious persecutions, he became an ardent priest. Several times imprisoned, often starving, his family homeless, he suffered humiliation for Christ. The startsi bestowed upon him their blessing and their wisdom; and he received from them an icon of the Vladimir Mother of God, as a consolation for the persecuted. With the retreat of the German army, they were evacuated to Berlin. And it was there that St. Seraphim chose Fr. Adrian to serve him: a portrait of St. Seraphim, saved from the advancing Red army, was forwarded to him for preservation. A spiritual family gathered around Fr. Adrian, like the first Christians governed entirely by the Church standards. The icon became the focal point of the community, which moved to West Germany and then, in 1949, to America.



MERICA by itself had never produced a convent that had endured: some would start and die (Vermont), others would be transplanted from abroad (California, Canada). Archbishop Vitaly blessed several immigrant nuns to form a monastery and name it in honor of the old Diveyovo: Novo-Diveyovo. It was to these "orphans of St. Seraphim" that the Saint, in his icon-portrait, was to come as Fr. Adrian arrived in New York. A temporary place was found in Nyack, N.Y., a run-down estate that had a pavillion built for an elephant, which served as their dwelling. There the sisters took care of the sick and homeless. One of them turned out to be their benefactor: when a former Roman Catholic convent nearby was offered for sale with the stipulation that a similar charitable institution be housed therein, the sick Mr. Maleyev gave his life's savings for it and the convent moved in, taking for its feast day the Dormition of the Mother of God.



The Diveyev portrait of St. Seraphim, painted not long before his death

The convent now had a large debt and no income; at times the situation was so critical that there was no food for the sisters; and Fr. Adrian's health was bad. Yet the daily services, according to the Diveyovo rule, were kept holy and performed. One day food was so scarce that Fr. Adrian went to town at market closing time in search of some throwouts. He came to a fish market and saw a good fish thrown out in the gutter as spoiled. He asked the proprietor if he could take the fish. The man, having found out the story, was so moved that he made a resolution that from then on, as long as his business would exist, he would provide the convent with fresh fish without charge. He kept his promise. And now no matter when you may come to the convent, the inevitable fish is on the table.

The opening of the cemetery gave the community a very monastic work: to bury and pray for the dead. A steady flow of pilgrims began to come for the services and to hear the stirring sermons of Fr. Adrian.

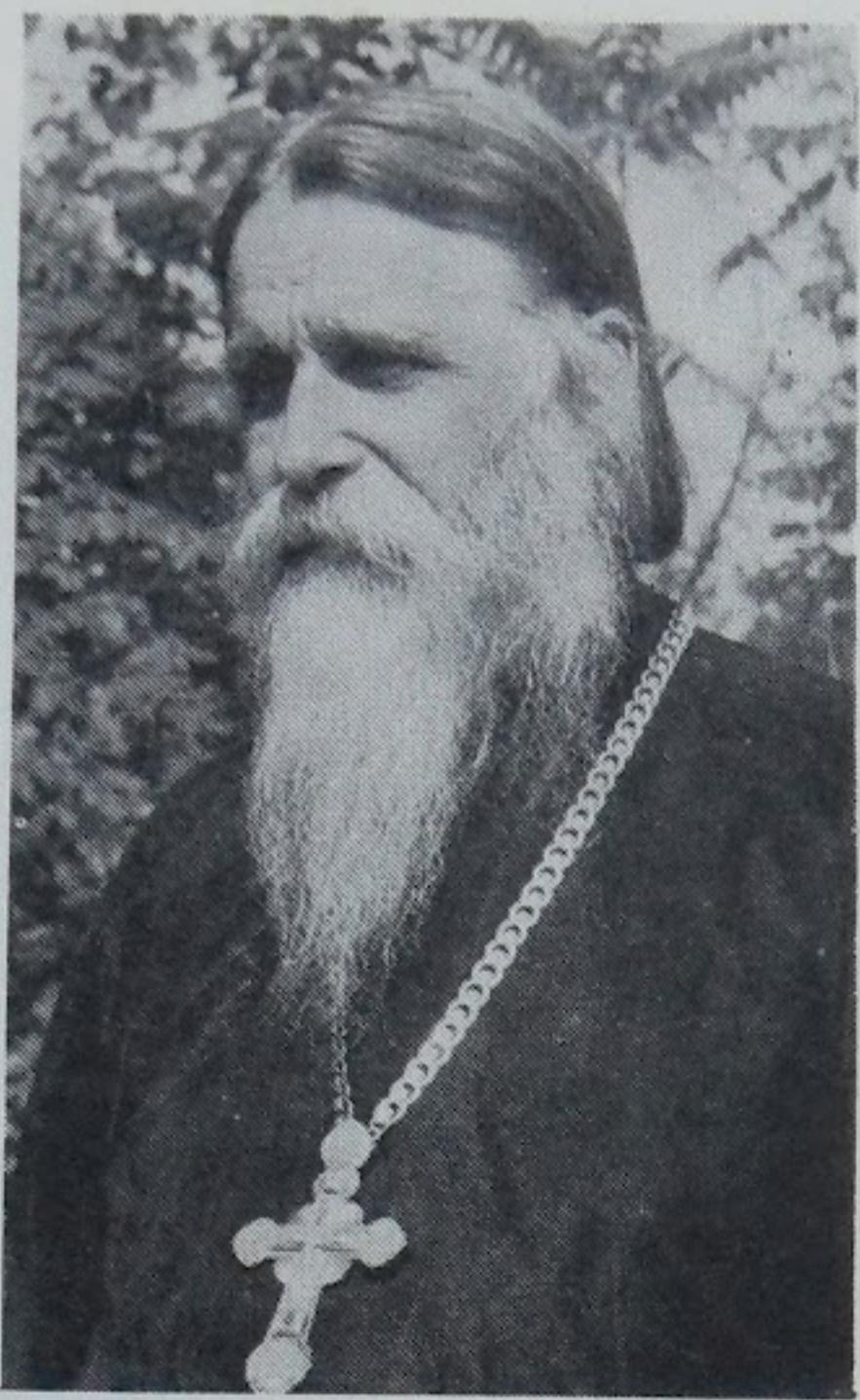
ODAY THE CONVENT, numbering over forty nuns, performs a much-needed function of Christian charity. Daily the sisters gather in the little church of the Dormition, in the presence of St. Seraphim in his icon-portrait, for their morning and evening monastic rule following the Saint's instruction. They all attend Divine Liturgy, after which, across the hall in the refectory, they have their meal while the Lives of Saints are read to nourish the soul. Then they disperse to their obediences: they take care of the sick, the old, and the homeless; they teach local children; they make their own candles, keep up beehives, maintain a bookstand; they take loving care of receiving, feeding, lodging and spiritually comforting the many pilgrims.

Every Wednesday after vespers in the Dormition Church an acathist is sung to St. Seraphim in the old Diveyovo chant. Sundays before the Liturgy in the main St. Seraphim Church an acathist is sung to the Protection of the Mother of God.

On feast days (the Dormition, St. Seraphim, and the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God) a solemn procession with the blessing of water is made around the monastery grounds. The procession passes by the lodgings of the nearby settlement of laymen with families who, under the convent's spiritual direction, lead a semi-monastic life.

Life within this "isle" of St. Seraphim is permeated by the presence of the Saint. The facial expression of his icon portrait changes: the Saint looks at you at times sternly, at other times almost radiates with his heavenly interceding warmth.

Next issue: A Pilgrimage to the New Kursk Icon Hermitage at Mahopac, N.Y.



Archpriest Adrian Rymarenko

Right: The Abbess of the Convent, Rev. Skhi-
Abbess Michaela, originally from a convent
in Shanghai, with a group of sisters, Father
Adrian and his presbytera, now deceased.

Below: St. Alexander Nevsky chapel at the
entrance of the cemetery.



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